

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2688

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 1910

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINS, CI

SUBJECT: CHILE HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 72468

1. PURSUANT TO YOUR TELEPHONE CALL, I HAVE TALKED WITH FONMIN CARVAJAL AND RAUL SAEZ. FOLLOWING IS MY TENTATIVE ASSESSMENT AS OF THIS MOMENT. AS INDICATED BELOW, I EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK WITH MORE ASSURANCE WITHIN THE WEEK.
2. YOUR MESSAGE RE POSTPONEMENT OF SECRETARY'S TRIP (STATE 71952) GAVE ME OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS SPECIAL PROBLEMS REGARDING CHILE, IN MY MEETING WITH CARVAJAL LATE MARCH 31. AFTER REVIEWING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AS REPORTED IN CHILEAN PRESS, I REMARKED ON PERSONAL BASIS THAT NET RESULT APPEARS TO BE THAT A VISIT TO CHILE BY THE SECRETARY WOULD ENTAIL AN APPRECIABLE POLITICAL COST FOR HIM IN THE UNITED STATES AND EXPRESSED IT AS MY PERSONAL OPINION THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OF A POSITIVE STEP OR SERIES OF STEPS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD BY GOC WOULD MAKE SECRETARY'S TASK MUCH EASIER.
3. CARVAJAL TOOK THE POINT PRECISELY. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR A GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF STEPS IT WOULD TAKE LOOKING TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF THE SITUATION IN CHILE. HE RECOGNIZED THE PEJORATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE

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EXISTING LEGAL STATE OF SIEGE AND THE EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURES

PERMITTED UNDER IT. THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD PREPARED RECOMMENDATIONS LOOKING TOWARD NORMALIZATION, BUT THERE WERE OBSTRUCTIVE FORCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF FEAR IN THE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP WHICH HAD THUS FAR MADE ACTION IMPOSSIBLE. CARVAJAL'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO INDUCE THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE TOWARD A RESTORATION OF CUSTOMARY CHILEAN PRACTICES, WHILE STILL PRESERVING FOR IT THE POWERS IT REALLY NEEDED TO COPE WITH TERRORISM.

4. CARVAJAL COULD NOT SAY HOW RAPIDLY GOVERNMENT WOULD MOVE IN DIRECTION HE ADVOCATED. I ASKED HIM WHETHER IT WOULD NOT BE WELL TO REVIEW SITUATION WITH PRESIDENT PINOCHET IN LIGHT NEW INFORMATION I HAD JUST GIVEN HIM RE SECRETARY'S VISIT. HE AGREED; SAID PRESIDENT WOULD RETURN FROM DEEP SOUTH NOON APRIL 3; AND HE WOULD SEE WHERE MATTERS STOOD AT THAT TIME.

5. RAUL SAEZ HAS JUST RETURNED FROM EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. I TALKED WITH HIM BEFORE HE RETURNED TO HIS OFFICE THIS MORNING. HE IS OF COURSE UNFAMILIAR WITH DEVELOPMENTS SINCE HIS DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE SHORTLY AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION WITH HIM. HOWEVER, HE HAS THE IMPRESSION -- WHICH I CONSIDER ACCURATE -- THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE TO THE SUBSTANCE OF YOUR MESSAGE TO HIM. BEFORE HE MAKES ANY CATEGORICAL STATEMENT, HOWEVER, HE WANTS TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH THE PRESIDENT AGAIN. HE WILL DO THIS FRIDAY OR SATURDAY, APRIL 4 OR 5, AND WILL GET BACK TO ME NO LATER THAN APRIL 7.

6. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM FOREGOING, IT IS DIFFICULT TO GIVE YOU A CATEGORICAL ANSWER TODAY TO QUESTION WHETHER GOC CAN DO ANYTHING ELSE IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD PRIOR TO THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. I MUST SAY THAT UP TO THIS POINT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN ENCOURAGING. EVER SINCE LAST DECEMBER WE HAVE BEEN RECEIVING REPORTS THAT VARIOUS SOURCES IN THE GOVERNMENT UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR A CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION OF GOC HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES AND, FROM TIME TO TIME, THAT CHANGES WERE IMMINENT. ASIDE FROM THE PROGRAM OF RELEASING DETAINEES INTO EXILE, NOTHING OF THE KIND HAS HAPPENED. CARVAJAL AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION VERY WELL INDEED, AND ARE DOING THEIR BEST. BUT THEY ARE FAR FROM THE CENTER

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OF POWER IN CHILE, AND HAVE SIMPLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO PUSH THEIR VIEWS ACROSS. SAEZ HAS WON INDIVIDUAL SUCCESSES, SUCH AS THE RELEASE OF CLODOMIRO ALMEYDA, BUT NO CHANGE IN OVERALL DIRECTION.

7. BASED ON THE FOREGOING, I CANNOT BE PARTICULARLY OPTIMISTIC AS TO THE GOC'S WILLINGNESS TO DO ANYTHING FURTHER IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD PRIOR TO THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. I DO NOT

THINK SUCH ACTION IS ENTIRELY EXCLUDED, HOWEVER. I AM SEEING
ADMIRAL MERINO, NAVAL MEMBER OF THE JUNTA, EVENING APRIL 2
AND WILL PURSUE THE POINT WITH HIM. IN MY JUDGMENT IT IS
STILL POSSIBLE THOUGH NOT PROBABLE THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE,
RAUL SAEZ, AND OTHER ELEMENTS SEEKING CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE
CAN PRODUCE SOME ACTION AND/OR STATEMENT WHICH WOULD IMPROVE
THE ATMOSPHERE. THE PICTURE WILL BECOME CLEARER IN THE DAYS
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S RETURN TO SANTIAGO.
I WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS.
POPPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SANTIA01910
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750112-0626
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750493/aaaadgwa.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 72468
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHILE HUMAN RIGHTS
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, OVIP, CI, (KISSINGER, HENRY A)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006